

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 388

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T JERUSALEM 601

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

FROM ATHERTON

US DEL NO. 42

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, IS, EG, XF

SUBJ: HIGHLIGHT OF ATHERTON TALKS IN CAIRO

1. WE HAVE JUST RETURNED TO JERUSALEM FROM A VERY FULL DAY IN EGYPT WHERE WE WENT FROM MEETING IN CAIRO WITH FONMIN KAMEL TO ISMALIA FOR MEETING WITH SADAT AND BACK TO CAIRO AIRPORT FOR FLIGHT HERE. WE WILL BE SENDING IN FULL REPORTS ON BOTH MEETINGS, HOPEFULLY IN TIME FOR RECEIPT IN WASHINGTON BY OPENING OF BUSINESS THURSDAY. MEANWHILE, FOLLOWING HIGHLIGHTS WILL BE OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST.

2. SADAT ACCEPTED ALL OUR SUGGESTIONS FOR DELETIONS AND MODIFICATIONS IN HIS MESSAGE TO BEGIN, SAYING HE HAD HIMSELF HAD SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT MESSAGE AFTER GIVING IT TO US AND APPRECIATED OUR DELAYING DELIVERY TO DISCUSS IT FURTHER WITH HIM. HE INSTRUCTED FONMIN KAMEL TO MAKE MESSAGE "VERY MILD" AND, WHILE FINAL PROOF WILL BE TEXT WE RECEIVE FOR DELIVERY TO BEGIN,

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I THINK IT WILL BE LESS LIKELY TO PRODUCE NEGATIVE REACTION FROM BEGIN THAN WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN THE CASE. ANOTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT WAS SADAT'S DECISION, IN RESPONSE TO SUGGESTION BY EILTS, TO CONVERT ORAL MESSAGE TO A PERSONAL LETTER TO BEGIN. SADAT ORIGINALLY WANTED BOTH EXISTENCE AND CONTENTS OF MESSAGE KEPT SECRET, BUT IN END AGREED THIS WAS

NOT REALISTIC. HE HAS, THEREFORE, AUTHORIZED ME TO INFORM PRESS, AFTER MEETING IN WHICH I DELIVER MESSAGE, THAT I HAVE CONVEYED A MESSAGE FROM HIM TO BEGIN. I HAVE ARRANGED TO INFORM EGYPTIANS THROUGH EILTS WHEN THAT MEETING WILL BE SO THEY CAN MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME. MEANWHILE, IT IS IMPORTANT, TO KEEP FAITH WITH BOTH BEGIN AND SADAT, THAT EXISTENCE OF MESSAGE CONTINUE TO BE CLOSELY HELD. SADAT WANTS ME TO TELL BEGIN THAT IN ANY CASE HE WANTS CONTENT OF MESSAGE TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

3. I HAVE MEETING WITH DAYAN AT 1045 LOCAL THURSDAY AND WITH BEGIN AT 1200. IF MESSAGE IS RECEIVED IN TIME, I WILL DELIVER IT AT 1200 AND TELL PRESS AFTER THAT MEETING (PROBABLY ABOUT 1330 LOCAL) IF NOT RECEIVED BY THEN, I WILL SEEK BRIEF MEETING FRIDAY MORNING (ABOUT 0930) BEFORE DEPARTURE FOR AMMAN AT 1100 TO FOLLOW SAME SCENARIO.

4. SADAT ALSO INSTRUCTED KAMEL TO DAY TO PREPARE EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSALS ON WEST BANK/GAZA FOR DISCUSSION DURING MY NEXT CAIRO STOP (MARCH 7). SADAT SAID THIS WILL BE FOR U.S. INFORMATION ONLY, TO BE HELPFUL TO PRESIDENT CARTER BEFORE BEGIN VISIT.

5. WITH KAMEL DURING THE MORNING'S MEETING, WE
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DISCUSSED IN DETAIL LATEST ISRAELI PROPOSED TEXT FOR DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. KAMEL TOOK HARD LINE AT BEGINNING BUT BY END OF MEETING, IN RESPONSE TO MY URGING, AGREED TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO MEET ISRAELI TEXT PART WAY ON OTHER THAN PALESTINIAN/WEST BANK/GAZA LANGUAGE IN EFFORT TO RESOLVE SECONDARY ISSUES. E WAS ADAMANT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE COULD NOT BE ONE WORD CHANGED IN ASWAN FORMULA ON PALESTINIANS WHICH ALRRADY REPRESENTED DIFFICULT COMPROMISE FOR EGYPT. HE ALSO SAID THAT TO EXTENT ISRAELIS MOVED ON PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE, THIS WOULD EFFECT EGYPT'S ABILITY TO BE FLEXIBLE ON OTHER PARAGRAPHS. I DOUBT WE WILL HAVE ANY FURTHER EGYPTIAN SUGGESTIONS ON DECLARATION BEFORE MY NEXT STOP IN CAIRO MARCH 7, AND THERE IS NO ASSURANCE THEY WILL IN THE END BE ALL HELPFUL. I AGAIN URGED KAMEL, HOWEVER, TO TELL ME FOR MY OWN GUIDANCE WHAT THEIR RELATIVE PRIORITIES OF IMPORTANCE WERE ON VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF DRAFT DECLARATION WHERE DIFFERENCES STILL EXIST, OTHER THAN ON PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE. HE PROMISED TO GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THEIR SUGGESTION.

6. THROUGHOUT OUR TALK, KAMEL REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT FURTHER COMPROMISES ON DECLARATION LANGUAGE (ESPECIALLY ON ASWAN PALESTINIAN FORMULA AND WITHDRAWAL FORMULA) WOULD CAUSE EGYPT MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH OTHER ARABS; EGYPT WAS IN VERY VULNERABLE POSITION ALREADY AS RESULT OF SERIES OF DEVELOPMENTS (CYPRUS AFFAIR BEING MOST RECENT) AND COULD NOT AFFORD TO WEAKEN ITS POSITION FURTHER IN ARAB EYES. EGYPT, KAMEL SAID, NOW NEEDS FULL U.S. SUPPORT; WE SHOULD CLEARLY CONFRONT BEGIN, WHO IS A DANGER TO US ALL.
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